Movement lesson

Angela 2 — Week 4, Day 2, Session 3 — 58 minutes

Summary: Russell speaks of the ground as a confirmation of being, then guides a lesson on the back — opening the knees, rolling the head with the pelvis, and differentiating the eyes — so contact with the earth locates the whole self. Afterward people name what they sense, and he closes toward lunch.

Confirmation

And there was one of the gifts I received. I'm assuming it was a product of the environment at Santa Sabina, where I've been many times, but somehow, having the nuns there, a word came to me about the earth that was a new word, and I realized it really fits for me.

And this relationship to the ground and to the earth is confirmation. It confirms our presence. It's a confirming of — it validates, it says that we are here.

And there's something in this meeting. And even as I speak, just let yourself move a little bit.

It keeps going deeper and deeper, the way, the mutuality of these bodies meeting as a confirmation of the location of this being. This being that I have access to is confirmed on this spot.

And having that in one's field with some consistency, that confirmation of being — I'm here.

Yeah, I looked at synonyms of confirmation. Validation.

In the church, it has to do with you're now mature enough to choose the church. You're confirmed, you're entering it. And for me, it's kind of the church of living, being confirmed, saying, I'm choosing this conscious life on this earth through this body, that I will do my best to let this life manifest through this particular form.

And there's something about this ground that is surprisingly — I don't know why after a hundred thousand times it's surprising — but it's surprisingly important. Layers in which it confirms us.

I just want to do a lesson. In our first lesson, just spending time with this relationship. We started last night with some of us just lifting the pelvis. Remember feeling the ground? Might have been a little sleepy. We'll go back to that.

Feeling this ground with great innocence. Working from there.

Contact

So please come on to your back.

[Silence 31 seconds]

Taking a few moments to let the attention spread throughout your contact with this ground.

You might notice how contact with the ground is not simply the surfaces that touch, like your heels touch the ground. But there's actually a way in which, by the heels touching the ground, the whole foot has place. And the rest of the foot is alive for something under.

So it's like your calves might touch the ground, the lower legs, the parts that touch the ground, but there's a sense of that whole volume, that whole way that the rest of the lower legs is known, because the ground is behind the part that's touching. It's not just the part that's touching that receives the benefit, we could say.

The back of the pelvis clearly on the ground, and yet feel how that gives location for the rest to be able to find other places.

Now the back of the head already begins to give location to the skull and the volume.

The right side

Just lightly, let your right knee begin to bend out to the side, as if you're going to let the leg, let the foot pull towards the pelvis, and then lengthen it again. And do that very lightly a number of times, so that you can listen to the influence throughout your pelvis, your back.

So just the right leg bending out to the side, kind of letting it pull up a little bit, and then lengthen, then a little more.

And begin to notice, could you simultaneously have the head roll to the right, and follow that movement through your whole self? When the leg lengthens, the nose goes back to neutral. When the knee is out to the side, the nose is out to the side, and you're tracking that. So the awareness is growing from foot to head.

Somehow the breath is sensed also.

And you notice how the front of that right hip joint drops and opens, and the left side of the pelvis lifts.

What else can you sense in your back?

Is it comfortable to let that knee really open? And letting the hip joint open, let the pelvis and the lower back respond. And you've got that. That's it.

And then pause with the leg long.

Just notice some of the differences, right and left. And then add a level of complexity.

Do the same with your right leg, but now have the head turn to the left, also in harmony. So the nose comes to its comfortable turning when the knee is out to the side, and they come back to neutral together.

So more of your cortex has to get involved in this kind of integration of two directions. It's still the right leg. That's the interesting part, that now we're tracking across your brain and across your body, and sensing the timing of the leg.

So the leg goes out to the side, and the nose goes to the side, and sense that all through.

And then a couple of times, just a little quicker, still light, but just more playful or easier, less concentrated.

Okay, and leave that. Pause for a moment.

[Silence 47 seconds]

Take your right hand and put it across your forehead so the fingers are pointing leftward. And just lightly turn your head left using your hand and arm, so as much as you can, let your head be passive. So your neck is being moved from a different origin.

This is one of Feldenkrais's insights, that the brain processes movement differently according to how it's initiated, and you can actually influence the organization of the neck. And go lightly so that you can really make sure you're not just turning your head with your hand up, that your hand is actually doing the turning of the head.

And notice the breath in the background sometimes. Feel the back of the head on the ground, changing.

And then lower your arm. Pause. And sense how the movement is, and the repercussions, or how it resonates when you stop. The hand rests, with the arm at rest.

And let your right knee open out to the side, and drag it up to where it comes to standing. Do that movement a few times.

Are you letting the back have a chance to respond? So the left side kind of lifts in the lower back and then comes back down.

Let that right leg stay standing, and put your right hand across your forehead.

As you turn your pelvis to the left, turn your head to the left also. So it's some sense that the movement of your head begins in your golden ball, begins in the pelvis, and it's joined in with the shoulder and the chest vertebrae kind of helping the head to move.

Let the right knee be vertical. And so the turning of the pelvis comes from your middle and is picked up by the upper body, and the eyes even can look to the left, and you're sensing that whole pattern of pressure along the floor.

You go to the left, then you come back, and go to the left, and come back, beginning in your pelvis and traveling through your whole spine, all the way to your eyeballs, so you can sense all the way through.

And the foot is really in contact with the floor.

And then you can pause, lower down, sense how that whole pattern of movement lives in you.

It's most probably a change in your pelvis from when we did the first movement of the knee coming out to the side, which tends to lower the right side of the pelvis, bring the hip joint back towards the ground. And then rotating the pelvis to the left tends to bring that side a bit forward, and I wonder if there's a difference that can be sensed.

The left side

And begin to let the left knee open out to the side. Just kind of experiment with sliding that foot on its outer edge and listening through your whole self.

Let the head also go out to the left. So it's the left leg now. Let the head go out to the left.

And if there's something in your left that feels really different than your right, you're free to go back, kind of check it out on your right side, and then come back to your left. If that's interesting to you. You don't need to, but if something is standing out, like, wow, that feels different there, where my back reacts differently, and you want to get some sense of, is that an accurate memory? Go to the other side.

And the main emphasis is left knee out, head turning left, letting that go through you.

Well, actually, since so many people are interested in it, why don't you go from side to side? Let your head go to the right and the right leg open, and go — is there anything different about the way my lower back relates to one leg going, or the way one hip joint opens, or how comfortable the knee is opening like that, or any ways that you can sense the differences.

Again, from Feldenkrais's point of view, this is giving your brain high quality information to work with. Just any noticing would be helpful.

Just let yourself enjoy this old movement, amphibian-like movement.

And then with your left leg, could you have the head turn to the right comfortably? Would that be simple? When the left leg bends, let the head go to the right. I think you can find that pattern.

Maybe we'll stop doing the right leg now and just the left. Yes.

And then again, a little bit quicker, lighter, more playful, less serious. And go right through the middle. Let the right leg bend and the head go left. Just let the whole be real simple, a light feeling inside.

Inviting those hip joints to open, as long as it's not painful in your knee or your hip, is really helpful for the functioning of the entire legs. As we get older — you know, as kids we had such free and mobile hip joints. As that gets less, it influences the knees, the ankles, the feet. Getting more freedom in your hip joints really helps all the joints of the legs.

Your left leg to standing. Feel that foot on the floor. Roll your pelvis a little bit to the right. Feel that connection through your knee and your hip, through your back. Keep the knee vertical. Remember that idea. If we keep the knee vertical, it really empowers your back.

And then put your left hand on your head and turn your head to the right. As you receive the movement from your pelvis, you contribute with something from your upper body, but letting your neck be as passive as possible. Kind of receiving through all the joints this empowerment from your middle.

Even letting your eyes open out.

That's beautiful. Okay, and then pause. Leave that. Legs rest.

Gravity

As you're lying here, is it possible that there is some kind of — could say an energy or force from the earth that you can sense in your body?

I wonder if what is called gravity, which is a pull towards the center of the earth, can actually be sensed. If there's something. Some sort of vibrational relationship.

We don't have to say there is or isn't, but we can open to the possibility. Question with our whole body, not with our thinking so much. Our thinking can help us move into the body, but to sense through the whole body.

Which grows food with the help of light and water — earth, of which our food comes. It's this energetic inlet that pulls the roots.

I wonder if our bodies have some relationship to that, that one can be conscious of, some living vitality.

And slowly let both knees open out to the side. Just feel that. Feel what would be comfortable. Listen to yourself. If your knees are not happy with that, then don't do that. But feel if there can be an opening in your hip joints that's comfortable, and then lengthen the legs.

So both knees will slowly bend out to the side, and the feet go kind of toward each other. Opening the bottom of your pelvis. Belly.

And even let the feet touch for a moment, if it's comfortable to be in that position. Let the soles touch each other. It's an old feeling. You no doubt had your feet touch at times in the womb. It's very old. Ottman saved these on sonograms — the feet touching, or the hands touching the feet. See, chimpanzees do that a lot.

Got some of that. Feel that opening in your hips, feet touching.

And then find a way to bring the feet to standing. Find the right distance between them. You might separate them a bit more. I bet there's a good connection to the earth, maybe a little wider than your pelvis, just so that you feel a sense of stability.

And if you freshly feel into each foot and each leg — is one clearer, brighter, one seeming more distant?

So we'll just keep the legs standing, keep the feet standing.

Feet, pelvis, and eyes

Feel how you can push off of your right foot and let your head roll to the left, and then push off your left foot, let the head roll to the right. But track the connection to the ground throughout.

So when you push off your left foot and the left side lifts, your head rolls right. Push off your right side, the head rolls left. So feel that all the way through, all the way through your eyeballs.

Let the knees stay more or less vertical, so you're kind of pushing out your hip joint. The hip joint goes forward a bit. It's almost as if someone's pulling on your thigh, lengthening your leg. Feel that go through you.

And if you have enough space between your feet, your knees won't need to drop down. If your knees are dropping from side to side, you might need a little more space.

And then find a way to go a little quicker, but still smooth, not throwing yourself. So let the knees stay. Find a way to turn your pelvis as if someone's pulling on that thigh, so that hip joint goes forward towards the navel. And fast and light, and all the way from your pelvis through your head, all the way to your eyeballs.

Okay, and then pause once again. Lower down.

[Silence 2 minutes]

And both legs to standing, both feet on the floor. Just a light movement forward and back of your pelvis, forward and back. Not left and right, but forward and back.

Feel that pull and push all the way through to your head. Listen to the change of pressure in your feet.

And as your pelvis goes forward, and the head is pulled down a little bit, let your eyes look down. And as your pelvis comes up, and your head gets pushed up a little bit, let your eyes look up.

So track the movement from your feet through your pelvis, through your head and eyes. Breathing.

Then let everything stay the same except change your eyes. So your head still does what it's doing. You gotta go slow. It's not so simple to take these patterns and interrupt them.

So you're letting your pelvis and head respond as they already are, but you're differentiating the eyes. Go slow.

So when your pelvis is rocking forward and your head is pulled down, your eyes are going up in your head. When your pelvis is going upward towards your head and the chin's going away from the chest, the eyes are going down.

Of course, you're breathing comfortably. Ready to smile at any moment.

And a little quicker if you can. Can you still be smooth? Still be smooth.

Then leave it. Pause. Rest with your hands over your eyes. Just look into the blackest black you can see. Just let them rest like that.

[Silence 31 seconds]

And know your arms.

Opposite directions

And bend your right knee out to the side, and your left leg to standing. So the left knee is vertical, the right knee is out to the side, the right foot is probably somewhere near your left foot. You find a comfortable place.

And put your left hand on your forehead, and turn your pelvis to the right, and let the hand pick up the movement, let the arm pick up the movement. Let the left knee stay vertical, and you turn rightward.

Let your pelvis turn rightward, your head, your eyes, and feel how you come to the ground with your right side.

You can even let the right arm come upward on the floor if that's comfortable. Find a way that it's not impeding your movement. Just find a comfortable place so that you can really roll rightward and have that go really through your whole spine, and you feel more of you contacting the floor, more of that right side.

That's it, all the way from the feet through. Feel how that right hip joint opens.

And then a couple of times, just kind of quick and light. Not throwing yourself, but just simpler. Letting your eyes really turn — that's so helpful for your upper spine, for those eyes to get involved in your turning.

That's it. Okay, and pause. Leave that.

Let your left leg open out to the side, your right leg come to standing. Just feel that. This is actually going to be a series of motions that will include this position. Work from here.

So just get the feeling for how your pelvis is, how that left hip joint opens, how that right leg finds its way here.

And put your right hand on your forehead and turn from your pelvis leftward, and let the upper body join in. The neck passive, eyes active, the jaw soften a bit. If there's any clenching of the teeth, let there be space between your teeth, so your eyes lead the movement.

And listen to the quality, and notice — can the movement stay as smooth, and have your eyes move opposite to everything else? Is there any way that that doesn't have to interfere with what your right leg is doing, what your breathing is doing? Just adding complexity without interfering with quality.

That's nice. And then let the eyes once again go to the left, and you might even feel that the rotation improves a little bit, now that you let the eyes go with the movement.

That's good. Okay, and come back to neutral. Pause.

[Silence 46 seconds]

And one more time, let the right knee open out, let the left leg stand. Put the right hand on the forehead.

And as you turn your pelvis to the right, turn your head to the left, and listen to how you can smoothly navigate those forces. 'Cause see, your upper back vertebrae are gonna be turning opposite to your lower back vertebrae, and how those forces interact.

We want that smooth and light if possible, that your eyes go far to the left, so you feel your left eye go to the outer edge and your right eye go to the inner edge.

And that movement of the eyes speaks directly to the cervical vertebrae, and we have this opposition of directions that needs to be integrated. It's a higher level of integration to take these different directions and create harmony out of them.

And then just a few times let the eyes go right, so they go in the direction that the pelvis is going in. And the left knee stays vertical, everything else stays the same.

Great. Okay, leave it, lower down, pause. If you want to place your hands over your eyes, that's fine.

Integrating at higher levels of complexity — this is one of Helen Price's great discoveries. Integrating at higher levels of complexity actually grows the intelligence of the system. It grows the capacity to integrate at higher levels of complexity.

So we take movements like this, and when you can integrate these various directions, your nervous system gets better at integrating more complex things.

Lower your arms.

Let your left knee open out to the side, let your right leg come to standing. Put your left hand on your forehead, and just take a moment imagining — turning your pelvis to the left, your head to the right. Just imagine that whole pattern. Imagine your eyes going to the right with the head. Picture that through your whole vertebral column.

And then once you've thought that through, turn your pelvis left, turn your head right, using your hand, so your left hand is on your head, and you're turning your head. Your knee stays vertical, and you do that action, if you can find it.

We're listening for smoothness, lightness, ease, or signs of integration. Breath is at ease, and your attention can be mobile.

And if you find that you've got a feel for that, then differentiate the eyes. Have the eyes go left.

And a little quicker and lighter, simpler. You know that a pattern is formed — you do it great, light, easy.

Good. Okay, lower down, pause here. Sense throughout your whole self. Sense the quality.

Then both legs standing, feet a little wider than your pelvis, with a stable stance. Just let the pelvis go towards the right, and the head right, and the eyes right. Let everything go right, with the knees vertical, and then everything go left.

Just a final kind of integrating movement, feeling from the feet to the eyes. Let the knees stay vertical now.

Feel as if the golden ball just turns and the head and eyes immediately get the message, oh, we're going that way. All the way through to your eyeballs.

Let it go and roll to your side. Come on up and see. See how that touches you.

Sharing

Make your time to feel the influence.

[Silence 31 seconds]

Your sense of space, inner and outer. Quality of yourself, and how you move in space. So feel free to move in whatever ways you like.

And if there are some qualities that get your attention, some influence, you can put them out. Find words, images.

[Russell:] Say it again.

[Participant:] Firmament.

[Russell:] You feel firm. Confirmament. Yeah, you feel really the ground, that presence on the ground.

[Participant:] A little more stable.

[Participant:] Freedom.

[Russell:] Is there a particular way you sense that?

[Participant:] Anywhere in the space.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] Or flexible in your pelvis.

[Participant:] Fluidity through the limbs.

[Participant:] Spiraling, so that when I turn, my head gets a little closer to the ceiling.

[Russell:] Spiraling, yeah. Lengthening as you spiral.

What's happening with you?

[Participant:] Jaunty.

[Russell:] Jaunty. You came up with such a beautiful smile, and you've had it ever since. It's a jaunty feeling.

[Participant:] Found.

[Russell:] Yeah. He found it again.

[Participant:] Sense of separation. That this is other and I can walk into. It's not that.

[Russell:] Yeah. Your body feels that you can walk into this space, this other space. That's kind of like this. There's a space I can walk into.

It's great. Well, this kind of lesson can be so integrating. This kind of getting that whole spine working, working from the middle out, connecting to the ground, and then differentiating, bringing it together again.

It's — I don't know, maybe there are other people besides Feldenkrais who worked in that way, but I don't know them, and I'm very grateful for that insight that he had.

Great, thank you. It's time for lunch.

I'm gonna make a recommendation. It's just a recommendation. That board is yours, so do whatever you want. I recommend not requiring linear writing, like maybe write all over the place. Write big, write small, write at angles. Let it kind of —

And if you're wanting a meeting with me and haven't signed up for one, sign up for one. There's an open spot for tonight, and there won't be one. If that spot's not taken, it won't be here tomorrow.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Okay.

[Participant:] Both sides, you say?

[Russell:] Yeah, stabilize.